

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 03573 01 OF 02 211619Z

47

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 SAM-01 /087 W

----- 006149

R 211410Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1571

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN

USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 3573

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PINT, IS

SUBJECT: IMPLICATIONS OF RABIN/PERES RELATIONSHIP

REF: TEL AVIV 3504 (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: RABIN-PERES RIVALRY, WHICH HAS SURFACED AGAIN IN MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS FOLLOWED BY HIGHLY PUBLICIZED RECONCILIATION MEETING, HAS ITS BASIS IN THEIR COMPETITION FOR THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP AND DIFFERING APPROACHES TO FOREIGN POLICY AND SECURITY ISSUES. THE TWO TOP LEADERS HAVE AGREED TO A PERSONAL CEASE-FIRE, NOT TO A PEACE AGREEMENT, IN WHICH THEY WILL SEEK TO COLLABORATE ON STATE AFFAIRS WHILE RESERVING THEIR OPTIONS ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE.

WEEKEND COMMENTATORS MAINTAIN ANOTHER FLAREUP IN THE NEAR FUTURE IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN AND THAT IT COULD EVEN LEAD TO RABIN'S DOWNFALL AND CABINET RESHUFFLE. OUR OWN VIEW IS MORE RESERVED. ALTHOUGH RABIN-PERES FRICTIONS COULD PRECIPITATE FLASH CRISIS, NEITHER OF THEM IS SEEKING SUCH A DEVELOPMENT.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 03573 01 OF 02 211619Z

RABIN DOES NOT WANT EARLY ELECTION, NOR DOES PERES APPEAR TO

HAVE ANY INTENTION TO RESIGN. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT DISILLUSIONED LABOR PARTY COULD FORCE RABIN TO STEP DOWN BUT WE DO NOT THINK SITUATION HAS YET DETERIORATED TO THAT POINT. IN THE MEANTIME, MEDIA ATTENTION TO RABIN-PERES RIVALRY HAS CONTRIBUTED TO PUBLIC DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE GOVERNMENT WHOSE CREDIBILITY IS ALREADY AT A LOW EBB AND PROVIDED RICH VEIN FOR OPPOSITION LIKUD TO EXPLOIT IN CALLING FOR REPLACEMENT OF ENTRENCHED LABOR ALIGNMENT POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT. END SUMMARY

1. THE RIVALS. RECRUDESCENCE OF LONGSTANDING TENSIONS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER RABIN AND DEFENSE MINISTER PERES HAS AGAIN HIGHLIGHTED THE DIFFICULT STATE OF AFFAIRS IN THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT. THESE TENSIONS, WHICH HAVE PERIODICALLY SURFACED AND SUBSIDED, REFLECT A MIX OF PERSONAL RIVALRY AND DIFFERING SECURITY/IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS. WHILE EACH TIME STOPPING SHORT OF A FULL-FLEDGED CRISIS, THE RECURRING CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO--STIMULATED AND DRAMATIZED BY THE MEDIA--HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE PUBLIC'S RELATIVELY LOW ESTEEM OF THE GOVERNMENT AND TO CONTINUING SPECULATION THAT AN OPEN BREAK BETWEEN THE TWO MEN MAY BE UNAVOIDABLE IN THE LONG RUN.

2. WHO IS IN CHARGE? RABIN'S LATEST OUTBURST AGAINST PERES, IN HIS SCARCELY VEILED MAY 12 INTERVIEW WITH HAARETZ CORRESPONDENT YOEL MARCUS, HAS AGAIN BROUGHT THE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO TO THE FORE. RABIN'S CAUSTIC REFERENCE TO THE DIFFICULTY OF NOT BEING ABLE TO FIRE A MINISTER WAS CLEARLY MEANT FOR PERES. THE LATTER PROMPTLY COUNTERATTACKED AT A MEETING OF THE LABOR PARTY EXECUTIVE, ANGRILY DEMANDING THAT IF RABIN WANTED ANYONE TO RESIGN HE SHOULD HIMSELF RESIGN AND BRING DOWN THE GOVERNMENT. THIS BICKERING IN PUBLIC WAS SCARCELY AN ISOLATED EVENT BUT RATHER PART OF A PATTERN OF FRICTIONS WHICH HAS CHARACTERIZED THE PERES/RABIN RELATIONSHIP FOR TWO YEARS.

3. POLITICAL COMPETITORS. A KEY ELEMENTS IN THE RABIN-PERES RELATIONSHIP IS DOUBTLESS THE FACT THAT THEY WERE AND REMAIN THE TWO LEADING CONTENDERS FOR THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP. RABIN NARROWLY BEAT OUT PERES IN THE LABOR PARTY CENTRAL COMMITTEE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 03573 01 OF 02 211619Z

ELECTION OF MAY 1974 AND IT HAS BEEN WIDELY ASSUMED SINCE THEN --INCLUDING BY RABIN--THAT PERES SEES HIMSELF AS RABIN'S EVENTUAL SUCCESSOR. THE FACT THAT PERES CONSISTENTLY COMES OUT AHEAD OF RABIN IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS ALSO MUST GRATE ON RABIN IN THIS REGARD, EVEN IF HE DOES NOT SAY SO OPENLY.

4. WHILE RABIN AND PERES HAD AGREED AT THE OUTSET TO WORK TOGETHER, THE RELATIONSHIP IN PRACTICE HAS BEEN FRAUGHT WITH

DIFFICULTIES AND TENSE MOMENTS. RABIN'S APPOINTMENT OF ARIK SHARON AS HIS GENERAL ADVISOR IN JUNE 1975 WAS WIDELY INTERPRETED AS AN EFFORT TO CLIP THE WINGS OF PERES AND GUR AND AS A SIGN OF HIS LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THEIR ABILITY TO RUN THE DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT. THE LEAK OF RABIN'S BACKGROUND COMMENTS DURING HIS JANUARY 1976 U.S. VISIT REGARDING SHORTCOMINGS IN ISRAEL'S ARMS REQUEST LIST, WHICH WAS READ AS AN ATTACK ON PERES, CREATED AN UPROAR AT HOME AND CAST A LONG SHADOW OVER WHAT WAS OTHERWISE A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL VISIT. MORE RECENTLY, RABIN HAS CRITICIZED PERES, WHO HAS MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY OVER THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES, FOR FAILING TO UNDERSTAND THE TREND OF DEVELOPMENTS ON THE WEST BANK AS SHOWN IN THE APRIL 12 ELECTIONS AND FOR HIS HANDLING OF THE CURRENT WEST BANK DEMONSTRATIONS AND PROTESTS.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 TEL AV 03573 02 OF 02 211559Z

47

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSM-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 OMB-01 SAM-01 /087 W

----- 005469

R 211410Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1572

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN

USMISSION SINAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 3573

5. ACCORDING TO ONE WELL-PLACED SOURCE, RABIN IS STILL SMARTING FROM WHAT HE BELIEVES WAS A CALCULATED EFFORT BY PRO-PERES SUPPORTERS TO UNDERCUT THE SUCCESS OF HIS JANUARY

TRIP TO THE U.S. IN ISRAELI PUBLIC OPINION BY LEAKING HIS BACKGROUND COMMENTS ON THE ARMS REQUEST LIST. RABIN HAS OBSERVED THAT THIS IS A REPLAY OF A PATTERN IN WHICH RAFI POLITICIANS FOR THEIR OWN POLITICAL/IDEOLOGICAL INTERESTS HAVE UNDERCUT PRIME MINISTERS COMING FROM MAPAI. SHARETT AND ESHKOL, ACCORDING TO RABIN, BOTH HAD TO PUT UP WITH SHARP ATTACKS FROM DAYAN AND PERES. ONLY GOLDA MEIR HAD BEEN ABLE TO HOLD THE LINE. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE EARLIER EXAMPLES OF POLITICAL INFIGHTING AND THE CURRENT SITUATION, RABIN BELIEVES, IS THAT PERES IS UNDERCUTTING HIM WHILE SERVING AS A CABINET MINISTER.

6. SECURITY/IDEOLOGICAL CONCEPTIONS. MANY OBSERVERS,ALTHOUGH NOT ALL, HOLD THAT RABIN AND PERES ARE AT ODDS ON BASIC QUESTIONS REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS, SETTLEMENT POLICY,AND THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK. THEY CLAIM THAT RABIN HAS CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 TEL AV 03573 02 OF 02 211559Z

BEEN HINDERED BY PERES AND THE RAFI FACTION FROM SHOWING GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON TERRITORIAL ISSUES AND CITE THE BUMPY COURSE OF SINAI II NEGOTIATIONS TO BUTTRESS THEIR ANALYSIS. SINCE RABIN HAS CULTIVATED THE ABILITY TO KEEP HIS REAL INTENTIONS AND VIEWS A MYSTERY WHILE SPEAKING CONSTANTLY, THE EXTENT OF THEIR DIFFERENCES IS NOT ALWAYS FULLY CLEAR, BUT SOME DISTINCTIONS NOW SEEM CLEARLY ESTABLISHED. ON SETTLEMENTPOLICY, RABIN APPEARS TO SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLES OF THE ALLON PLAN WHILE PERES FAVORS UNLIMITED SETTLEMENT THROUGHOUT THE WEST BANK. RABIN HAS BEEN OPENLY CRITICAL OF THE GUSH EMUNIM SETTLERS AND OPPOSED TO QADOUM, WHILE PERES SUPPORTED THEM AND FAVORED THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SETTLEMENT THERE. THE CURRENT DISCUSSION OF WHAT KIND OF POLICY TOADOPT TOWARD WEST BANK DEMONSTRATIONS,WHICH IS JUST GETTING UNDERWAY,MAY HIGHLIGHT FURTHER DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO.

7. IMPLICATIONS. AS ONE SEASONED OBSERVER PUT IT, RABINAND PERES REACHED A CROSSROADS THIS PAST WEEK AT WHICH ANEXPLOSION COULD HAVE KILLED BOTH OF THEM POLITICALLY. SEEING THE DANGER, THEY HAVE AGAIN BACKED OFF AND AFFIRMED THEIR INTENTION TOCOOPERATE OF AFFAIRS OF STATE. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS OBVIOUS THAT THEY HAVE AGREED ONLY TO A CEASE-FIRE AND NOT TO A PEACE AGREEMENT. MOST COMMENTATORS THIS WEEKEND BELIEVE ANOTHER EXPLOSION BETWEEN THE TWO IN THE NEAR FUTURE IS VIRTUALLY INEVITABLE. SEVERAL SEE THE LABOR PARTY THEREAFTER RELUCTANTLY ASKING RABIN TO STEP DOWN ON THE GROUNDS THAT HE HAS UNDERCUT PARTY UNITY AND IS NO LONGER ABLE TO LEAD THE COUNTRY.

8. OUR OWN PROGNOSIS IS MORE RESERVED. WE BELIEVE THAT NEITHER RABIN NOR PERES IS INTENTIONALLY SEEKING A

PARTY OR CABINET CRISIS. RABIN DOES NOT WANT EARLY ELECTIONS BUT RATHER TO KEEP HIS DEFENSE MINISTER UNDER CONTROL. PERES, FOR HIS PART, HAS NO INTENTION TO MAKE LIFE EASIER FOR RABIN BY TENDERING HIS RESIGNATION, AND HAS CAST HIMSELF IN THE ROLE OF A MAN PLACING HIS RESPONSIBILITY TO THE STATE ABOVE PARTISAN CONSIDERATIONS. WHETHER THE FRICTION BETWEEN THE TWO WILL SNOWBALL INTO A SITUATION OVER WHICH THEY WOULD HAVE LOST CONTROL IS UNPREDICTABLE. WE STILL BELIEVE THE COALITION CAN SURVIVE UNTIL THE ELECTION, BUT SURPRISES CANNOT BE RULED OUT. CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 TEL AV 03573 02 OF 02 211559Z

9. IN THE MEANTIME, THE RABIN-PERES RIVALRY HAS FURTHER DAMAGED THE GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC STANDING, ALREADY AT A LOW EBB, AND PROVIDED MORE AMMUNITION FOR THE OPPOSITION PRESS AND THE LIKUD. THEIR RIVALRY ALSO AFFECTS THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, WITH DECISIONS OFTEN TAKEN ONLY WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY AND TOO LATE. THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH TO QADOUM IS A CASE IN POINT. ALL IN ALL, THE RECURRENT FRICTIONS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RABIN AND PERES BODE LITTLE GOOD FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY EITHER TO FORMULATE FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES OR TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO THE DIFFICULT CHALLENGES AHEAD. DUNNIGAN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DISPUTES, POLITICAL LEADERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 MAY 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: SmithRJ
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976TELAV03573
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760197-0714
From: TEL AVIV
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760526/aaaaawja.tel
Line Count: 251
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 TEL AVIV 3504
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: SmithRJ
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 MAY 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <10 SEP 2004 by SmithRJ>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: IMPLICATIONS OF RABIN/PERES RELATIONSHIP
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS, (PERES, SHIMON), (RABIN, YITZHAK)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006